

the word democracy into disrepute. Both Plato and Aristotle viewed it with disfavour. Plato, whose ideal polity was the planned state of Crete, referred to democracy as a 'charming form of government, full of variety and disorder, and dispensing a sort of equality to equals and unequals alike.' Aristotle, although he believed that democracies were likely to be more stable than oligarchies, questioned the wisdom of the principle of universal equality inherent in democracy, which he defined, in his *Politics* (Book IV), as "a government in the hands of men of low birth, no property, and vulgar employments." After Aristotle, democracy became identified with mob rule. Soon the term 'democracy' became discredited. Political thinkers concerned themselves primarily with such well-established categories such as monarchy and aristocracy.

Democracy came to be rejected on two grounds. Democracy was considered suitable only for a small country; it was inapplicable to large communities or big countries. The second reason for rejecting democracy was its identification with mob rule.

In England, democracy may be said to be slightly over a century old. In 1534, Henry VIII replaced the authoritarian Church of Rome with the no less authoritarian Church of England. But this formal transference of ecclesiastical power from Rome to London did not settle matters. The forces let loose by the Protestant Revolution could not and would not be contained by the traditional royal authority or by religious centralisation. Both were severely and stubbornly challenged by large segments of the English nation, including the Bible-reading middle class. For a century and a half, there was a wide-ranging struggle involving conflicting claims in the field of power and conscience—Parliament versus royal authority, Puritans versus the Established Church, dissenters versus other Protestants. The great conflict, which included a regicidal Civil War in the seventeenth century, ended decisively in 1689, with the proclamation of the Bill of Rights and the acknowledgement of the supremacy of Parliament.

William of Orange, the new Protestant monarch imported from Holland. Indirect democracy, found suitable for modern states with large populations, was developed in England in the seventeenth century. By 1850, the majority of nations had adopted democratic institutions. In Asia the seeds of democracy were sown when European imperialism was established.

Meaning of Democracy

Definitions of democracy are various. Dicey defines democracy as the form of government in which the governing body is a comparatively large fraction of the entire nation. Bryce accepts the definition that democracy denotes the form of government in which the ruling power of the State is largely vested in the members of the community as a whole. MacIver says, "Democracy is not a way of governing, whether by majority; or otherwise, but primarily a way of determining who shall govern and broadly, to what ends." This involves a freedom of choice in electing the rulers. It means that democracy has a popular base and it hinges upon the consent of the governed.

Democracy literally means "rule of the people", not the rule of the majority, for people means all the people, and, therefore, includes the minority as well as the majority. A system cannot be properly described as democratic if the majority has no share in the government. Many critics of democracy from Plato onwards have pointed out the danger of majority rule: if most men are ignorant, then democracy means the rule of the ignorant, which is bound to be bad. Democracy is a political doctrine, not a class doctrine, and politics has to do with opinions as well as material interests. An individual is sometimes a member of the majority, sometimes a member of the minority, and in opinion there is no permanent majority. Hence, in practice, democracy means the rule of whoever happens to constitute the majority on every issue or on every case. Even so, the decision of the majority is not the method of democracy, since parliamentary democracy is the method of democracy, since parliamentary democracy is the method of democracy in Britain. By parliamentary democracy